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THE
USES OF SOLITUDE.

BY WILLIAM R. SMITH.

"FANCY DREAMS,
RAPT INTO HIGH DISCOURSE OF PROPHETS OLD,
AND WANDERING THROUGH ELYSIUM, FANCY DREAMS
OF SACRED FOUNTAINS AND O'ERSHADOWING GROVES
WHOSE WALKS WITH GOD-LIKE HARMONY RESOUND."

Akenside.



PRINTED FOR THE
ALABAMA ALPHA OF THE PHI BETA KAPPA SOCIETY
OF THE UNIVERSITY AT TUSCALOOSA.

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BY WILLIAM R. SMITH,

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the Middle District of Alabama.

a.m. P., Oct. 25, 1929

HON. WM. R. SMITH:

Dear Sir — The undersigned have been appointed a Committee by the Alabama Alpha of the Phi Beta Kappa Society, to tender you the thanks of that body, for the elegant Poem delivered by you on the evening of the 11th inst., and to request a copy of the same for publication.

With the highest respect,

Your ob't serv'ts,

JO. C. GUILD,

J. T. SEARCY,

W. A. BATTLE.

TUSCALOOSA, July 14th, 1860.

THE
USES OF SOLITUDE.

PART I.

I.

The graceful offices of Solitude
When Labor seeks her aid ; the soothing spell
Of Silence when the intellect at first
Its early meditation cultivates
And weds its timid thoughts to lofty themes,
Patient maturing ; these inspire my song,
And call upon the MUSE contemplative,
Egeria, guardian Maid of Solitude,
To point the way, and urge the votary on
To heights yet unattained, but still in view
And seen by Fancy's meditative eye.

II.

Let every man achieve his own renown,
 Nor wait for Fortune ; multitudes may shout
 O'er small deserts, and give elated Hope
 Deceitful promises ; Posterity
 Will not be thus betrayed ; who waits on others
 Loses his time and dies without a name.

To climb the pyramid that others build
 And stand upon the summit, grateful is
 To human curiosity ; to gaze
 From the high peak upon the plains below
 Multiplies wonder and brings reverence,—
 For thousands climb where only one doth build,—
 Yet all this wonder, all this reverence
 Is admiration only for the man
 Whose genius planned and shaped the mighty pile ;
 The Temple is forgotten in the thought
 That flies in its impatient inquiry
 To find the master-builder of the fane ;
 Thus, to CREATIVE GENIUS doth mankind
 Bend the uncushioned knee.

III.

Whether of granite or of shadows made,
 Rising majestic on the lofty mound
 Or swelling solemn from Tradition's vale,

Fame's towers themselves are Solitudes whose tongues,
 Marble or mist, instruct posterity.
 That pyramid was reared by Cicero ;
 Horace reared this, irregular ; dispute
 Leaves that grand shaft in mystery ;—Fancy says,
 Lucretius bought the granite ; yon huge pile
 Of modern architecture is of rock
 Primeval, quarried from the hills of Eden.

Still, in the mountain gorge, the ancient winds—
 As young to-day as when at first they sprung
 Strong from their azure cradles in the sky—
 Still, in the mountain gorge, those ancient winds
 Are shouting requiems to Leonidas !
 In the deep forest where the marble arms
 That clasp the everlasting hills reach not
 To prop the level, unaspiring, plains,
 There still doth ring the shouts of MARION'S MEN,
 And MARION lives, even in the blades of grass
 That freshly every morn diurnal dews
 Shed sparkling to his deathless memory.

Shadows of mighty men make Solitudes :
 The spot whereon the SUN, great sculptor, carved
 Gigantic the dim shape of Washington—
 VERNON—shall live, when all the granite hills
 That man doth proudly pile for him shall lie
 In crumbled heaps amid earth's ruined fanes.

IV.

In Meditation's robes arrayed, inspired
With longings infinite yet undefined,
Thoughtless of whence the spell that stirs the soul
In its upliftings after excellence,
The youth of high ambition stands apart
Restless, and striving how to find and seize
The unattained perfection of his race.

In Solitude remote the secret lies
That leads the mind to its maturity.

In Solitude are tutors which supply
Great tomes of varied learning to direct
The Fancy how to plan and execute ;
To pile the ledges of immortal thought ;
To shape symmetrical the rounded phrase,
And chisel, into form, Philosophy.

There, Silence takes the timid thought and guards
The tremulous idea from rude hands ;
No critic's babbling tongue is heard ; no eyes
Severe are bent upon the aspiring boy,
As timidly he matches dainty thoughts
With quaintest phrases ; there no frigid sneer—
Envy's abortion when it tried to smile—
Doth twist the lip of censure, but applause,
Grateful, salutes Imagination's ear,
Crowns eager Hope with radiant resolution,
Inspires belief and promises reward.

Behold the Athenian boy in Solitude,
 Calling the waves to crowd about his feet! —
 Timid of living auditors but bold
 To mate his periods with the shouting sea!

The youthful Roman glimpses caught of Fame,
 And longed to reach her highest hills and bathe
 The wings of thought in Glory's rays, untangled
 By mist or shadow: Tully thus aspired.
 Within himself he sought retreat, and there,
 Leaning upon the rail of Genius' altar,
 Planned and perfected Life's immortal scheme;
 Forged his own keys and opened all the doors
 Of dim Philosophy; enraptured found
 The slumbering past and winged it for the future;
 Sought Athens, in remembrance of great days,
 To tread the soil, tho' desecrate, that once
 Echoed the footsteps of Demosthenes;
 Listened amid the ruins of her fanes,
 To learn how centuries had melodized
 The tones that jarred the hills of Macedon;
 Stole through the ancient groves where Zenophon
 And Plato talked with Socrates; embraced,
 Fervid, the breathing pillar that upheld
 The Temple where Apelles ruled and felt,
 Inspired, the graceful presence of Aspasia:—
 Nor paused,—but at the portals of great schools
 Declaimed in Greek, and practised as a boy
 Before a master; all instructions caught,

Bent on perfection in forensic arts.
 He Mystery sought and woke the Delphian God,
 Enquired his fate and heard the Oracle :
 “Upon thyself rely ! O Cicero !”

V.

Great thoughts mature themselves in Solitude ;
 Appearing through the shadows of a dream
 Dimly at first, being eagerly pursued,
 In shapes immaculate they leap at last
 Rounded and perfect from the sombre arms
 Of all embracing chaos. Plato saw,
 Without the aid of revelation, places
 In the deep future, where the soul might rest
 Immortal, from its clay-cold element
 Removed and purified — beyond the grave.

Flowers that had blossomed through long centuries
 On Aristotle’s brow, before the gaze
 Of patient Galileo, fell and died.

The unchained lightning that had ever moved
 Giant primeval of the flood and storm,
 Scorning the Rainbow’s curving attitude
 And threatening to demolish her sweet arch,
 Was dragged from out its cloud built towers and
 brought
 To kneel with Science at the flaming altar

Of conquering Genius ; there was taught to know
Its other duties ; in obedience
Was made to whisper love tales, and to shout
The news of battles and the death of kings.

VI.

Dimly upon the sailor's eye prophetic
A world appeared, with cliffs and craggy borders ;
Its beaches reaching far their snowy limbs
Into the cooling waters ; towering trees
Lifting aloft their giant boughs familiar
Towards the same sun that lit Genoa's morning.
This vision of the Fancy grew to be
A haunting thought, and science was applied,
And wit and eloquence were brought to aid
Its fair development ; fools sneered ; savans
Tested impatiently, despaired and scoffed ;
Monarchs,— some busy pulling nations down,
Others too eager in the fond pursuit
Of all absorbing pleasure,— had no ears
For schemes absurd ; and so the sailor, driven
From court to court, took refuge in himself,
Still pondering day and night through weary years
The grand reality. It lifted him
Out of the world and far above mankind,
And made him an inhabitant of realms
Where only Genius dares to place its foot.

VII.

Immortal Homer, blind, unfinished left
 His glorious works. Far scattered lay in waifs
 His song disjointed ;—statues without heads,
 Heads without bodies,—each a master-piece
 Wanting the knitting symmetry of joints,
 Until a hand less mighty than his own,
 But schooled in Solitude and taught to know
 The conquering uses of unbroken toil,
 Restored each limb, combined the graces each,
 And gave a tone and harmony to all.

Who this achieved ? A solitary man,
 That Hermit Legislator who ordained
 Laws that formed heroes for the youthful state,
 And taught the mortal Spartan how to make
 A name immortal in Time's calendar.

Lycurgus hail ! Hail lonely laborer !
 Lo ! where he pensive leans his iron face,
 Prone for a moment on the sombre tome
 But recent closed for recreation ! Now
 His other task, with phrensy lighted eye
 And brows made glad by change of occupation,
 Labor of love, he cheerfully essays,
 And sits slow tying up the broken strings
 Of Homer's shattered harp ! All spirits throng,
 All, save white-eyed Despair whose dripping wings

Low hang where Labor strives:— All spirits come,
 And, shouting through his trumpet veins, arouse
 His mighty heart assiduous, and so touch
 His mind with inspiration, that his thoughts
 Exultant trace the self-same channels, (slimed
 With moss of centuries,) that Homer carved
 For Rills Pierian.

VIII.

Art thou ambitious to control mankind?
 Would'st draw the eyes of multitudes; become
 A moving power amongst the credulous?
 Look through the broad historic page and learn
 The secrets of the rise of mighty men;
 How Power and Solitude have ever dwelt
 Together in the closest brotherhood.

“The King can do no wrong:” this phrase its force
 Asserts oracular behind the throne,
 That Delphic recess of a tyrant sway,
 Mysterious made by shadows from a crown.

IX.

The muses have their Springs Pierian,
 Those fancy Meccas, where the Nymphs keep guard.
 There none may come but gentlest devotees,
 And such as recognize the tender sway
 Of Harmony, that monarch of soft souls.

There Homer, searching, found serene retreat ;
 There Shakespeare tarried idling, of the Nymphs
 Petted—still petting the enchanted maids ;
 Anacreon there quaffed bubbles, magic draughts ;
 There Collins wandering found the wizard shell
 Whose coral lips made PASSION eloquent ;
 There Beattie dreamed, and from the mossy seat
 Saw FAME'S PROUD TEMPLE on the heights afar ;
 There Grey majestical a moment paused,
 And, solemn listening to the curfew knell,
 Saw Night erect of stars a monument
 Colossal over the departed day.

X.

But Earth hath gloomier Solitudes, those fanes
 Mysterious—Superstition's homes,—their Priests
 Uttering with Delphian tongues oracular,
 And mystic lines prophetic, the fate
 Of men and empires. Crowns have fallen, and states
 Have grown and perished by the breath of these.
 The wisdom of antiquity did crowd
 Around their portals with impatient ear ;
 The Solons and the Platos of old time
 Their homage paid and sought the dim decree.
 So, Mystery, hand in hand with Solitude,
 Power created and made absolute.
 The Roman twins, beast-nurtured, had their sway ;
 Numa brought laws from feigned Egeria's grove,

The wise decrees of solitary Labor,
 Owing their potency to mystery ;
 Two children born immediate of the sun
 Gave Kings to Peru for a thousand years ;
 Mahomet had his angel and his cave,—
 With what results, let Christendom explain.

XI.

In ancient times, each army on its march
 Carried a Seer, in Solitude pavilioned ;
 His thoughts companioned with some stroling bird,
 His eye prophetic inward turned to gaze
 On Fortune's panoramics shifting ever ;
 In him the elements of Fate did meet.
 This lonely man determined when a crown
 Should tumble, when a state should rise or fall ;
 He battles fought beforehand and decided ;
 To cowards he gave courage, promising
 Victory in advance ;—so ruled the camp
 And made great names to gull posterity.

XII.

What Seer but walked the earth in Solitude ;
 What Prophet but received the gift of Heaven
 Alone, and inspiration caught while Silence
 Enamored hovered round the voice of God !
 When favored Noah, not incredulous,
 Th' advancing cataracts beheld, and heard

The opening window of the storm rent sky
Groan on its muttering hinge—he was alone !

When Lot was told to fly the fated city,
That death was hovering near ; that all the sky,
Its stars inverted Δ tnas, was preparing
Tempestuous the flaming tides of wrath,
He was alone ! Still entertaining angels.

XIII.

In Solitude the grandeur of the mind
Reaches its loftiest height ; self resolution,
Cased in the iron armor of the soul,
Conquers all ills, all terrors vanquishes :
Thus man approaches God in shape and will,
While evils in his presence but assume
The graceful forms of blessings absolute.
With what subduing power, with the lions
Crouched at his feet, did mighty Daniel stand !
Suns blazed around him, and his eyes did glow
Celestial, and commanding attitudes
Marked him Creation's Representative.

So lesser men have lesser deeds achieved,
But still in grandeur do the deeds appear.
God comes in various shapes to aid his creatures ;
He gives to Labor now the power he gave
To Seers in ages when the arts were young.
Labor the secret is that leads to Fame,
Or Good,—and Good is all the end of Life.

XIV.

When monarchs frown and Liberty, assailed,
 Flies shrieking at the touch of Tyranny
 To some deep cavern or some mountain height,
 Her voice is heeded best by him who there
 Hath seen her in her craggy fastnesses,
 For there she nurses heroes for her wars.

Amid the cliffs of Switzerland, whose tongues
 Are ever eloquent, was Tell first taught
 How beautiful the hate of tyrants is ;
 And there the echoes of Oppression's groans,
 In hideous uproar, caught the patriot's ear.

XV.

When the rude Mussulmen with impious feet
 The precincts of the Holy Sepulchre
 Invaded and made desecrate, whose voice
 Aroused the Christian million ? Popes were dumb,
 And monarchs, Christian-crowned, were silent all,
 Unmindful and neglecting to rebuke
 The turbaned insolence that soiled the Tomb
 Of Holy NAZARINE. What breaks the spell
 And shakes the yoke that galls the harnessed neck
 Of sluggish Christendom ? One gentle voice
 Faint rising from a solitary cell,
 The passionate wailings of an angry soul

Touched with sublime resentment : PETER comes,
 THE HERMIT, from self-banishment, and brings
 The hoarded learning of a studious life,
 With strength to mate the thought's maturity ;
 An iron will, with eloquence ; a zeal
 Grand in its sweep — in its results, sublime,

XVI.

The man of lofty genius, who consorts
 With Labor as a chosen mate, and sits
 And talks with her as conjugal, and leans
 Confiding on her fondly for support,—
 Not scorning to uplift her on his wings
 And waft her sometimes to the land of dreams,
 Where she may decorate herself with fancies,—
 That man meets for denials ; to his eye
 Nature reveals all secrets ; to his ear
 Selectest melody is ever shaped,
 And harmonies divine enchant his soul.
 The chest of ancient lore, whose ponderous lid
 Is never lifted to the indolent,
 Or, if half-lifted, on its groaning hinge
 Falls back, its mystic wonders yet unseen,
 To him is open thrown, and all its gay
 And gaudy contents are spread out before him,
 As if the ages past had gathered them
 For his especial use.

XVII.

FANCY delights to pet her chosen sons,—
 Mortals predestined to immortal walks ;—
 She leads them to her sacred haunts remote
 From gay Frivolity's profaning touch,
 And opens there her treasures, — boundless all—
 In rich variety profusely strewn.
 To every votary a wand is given ;
 To every eye such jewels are displayed
 As suit the separate longings of each mind.

To Homer's ear she makes the Universe
 One harp, star-strung and touched by angel fingers ;
 He hears the sullen roar of Vulcan's forge,
 Stands by the great Artificer and plans,
 Authoritative, mad Achilles' shield.
 For Homer's feet the Ocean dries her caves ;
 The coral nymphs admit him to their cells ;
 To Homer's knock the portals of the sky
 Fly open, and the Gods are all betrayed !
 The Goddesses themselves in vain do fly ;
 The light streams in and Juno drops her veil.

All the Celestials the Bard's vassals are,
 And fly to do his bidding when he sings :
 Venus attending with her mystic lore
 Supplies a charm for all emergencies ;
 And Jupiter, in azure heaps, keeps ready
 Selectest thunder, and down hurls, in streams,
 Red avalanches riven from out the sky,

To light the fearful path that Terror treads
On earth while mortals wage immortal wars.

Minerva speaks:—all the resounding aisles
Of the celestial Pantheon are filled
With such soft tones as Harmony holds ever
Ready conceived for Wisdom's mellow words.
Such sounds, such raptures, are reserved alone
For those whom Fancy with the Gods acquaint.

Long lingering by the gates of Paradise,
Did curious Milton see the first sad tear,
The crystal lava of Eve's burning brain,
Molten, diffuse itself along the cheek
Where naught before had watered beauty's bloom
But faithful kisses.

XVIII.

So wait the Wood Nymphs on the favored Bard,—
Display their mysteries and their haunts betray;
Their passions show, their weaknesses, their loves,
And all the gay enchantments that surround,
In various shapes, their sylvan Solitudes.
Diana calls in Ovid to behold
Her beauties shadowed in the amorous waters,
That laughed in bubbles round her glowing ankles,
And sighed to clamber up the marble pillars:—
While Actæon, frantic boy, intemperate gazed,
And lost his life for his audacity!

So the Infernals wait on Fancy's sons:—

E'en sullen Charon smiles as Dante comes,
 Forgets the chartered franchise of his boat
 And gives free passage to th' adventurer ;
 While Pluto's gloomy mansions sudden shine
 Effulgent, that the dunnest cell may show
 Secrets to him, the favorite Bard, who wears,
 Circling his finger, FANCY's signet ring.



PART II.

I.

After long years of toil and baffled hopes,
 When comes a great achievement, recognized,
 Escaped from doubts perplexing, fashioned full
 To call the trumpet praises of mankind,
 With what a joyous spring the bounding heart
 Exultant leaps to Glory's circling arms ;
 How leans the insatiate ear to catch the shouts,
 Borne on the breezes, that proclaim success ;
 How thus assured the expanding soul aspires
 To seek divine perfection for its mate !
 Man dons the shining armor of RENOWN,—
 RENOWN that all men worship in their youth ;
 For this the ardent mind pursues the path

That leads to learning through the gloomy vales
 Of Ignorance ; for this the stubborn WILL
 Scorns the deceitful promises of sloth
 And conquers fate ; for this the graceful arm
 Effeminate of Genius Labor clasps,
 Lifts the huge sledge and makes the anvil ring.
 Ah ! nothing so inspires the soul of youth,
 And urges him to noble enterprisces
 Plann'd for the future, as the wish to live,—
 To live immortal in the world's esteem ;
 That dead, he still may hear the lauding shout
 Mellifluous climb the advancing walls of Time,
 Sounding his name and calling generations,
 Each as they pass, to note his character.

II.

How few achieve the task sublime ; how many
 Buckle Intent upon their limbs and struggle,
 But weary grow and faint ; long tarrying
 For recreation at the spring of pleasure,
 Dipping therein the wings of Resolution,
 Till saturate they shake their plumes no more.

Soft Melancholy with her drooping eyes
 Doth oft invade the realms of Solitude ;
 But not alike to all is mischievous :
 To minds unstrung, in Fancy's mazes lost,
 With giddy thoughts, disjointed, fragmentary,

And incoherent — to such minds as these
 Alone, is Melancholy dangerous.
 It madness was, and brought its fatal spell,
 To sullen Byron ; it supplied the cup
 Of poison to the gloomy Chatterton ;
 Ogre-like seized our Edgar Poe and dragged
 That eagle-nightingale from out the sky.
 To others, stubborn and superior,
 It is a slave to serve best purposes :—
 To Homer, Virgil, Dante, it but held
 The pencil for the sombre finishing
 Of gloomy pictures ; — help-mate, meet indeed, —
 And quick to wait on solitary toil
 Not misdirected but by Genius guided :
 For logic, breeding curiosity
 To tread the mazes of mysterious reason,
 Doth system bring and cheerfulness to quell
 This rebel Misanthrope.

III.

Shun Pleasure's haunts ; drive Melancholy hence ;
 For who achieves Renown must Patience serve,
 And cultivate assiduous her dim smiles :
 Twice seven years serve if such the term prescribed,
 For no abatement she allows of time ;
 No shrinking from fatigue she tolerates.
 Whoso deserts the post that she assigns,

In haste or folly, perishes ; who runs
To climb Fame's icy hill must surely fall,
Prone to the plain, not planting well his foot.
Be not in haste, let Phaeton dead instruct.
Seek not the office, let the office seek ;
Genius, well schooled, will not be long delayed,
For monarchs know the art to prop a throne.
There be who try, impatient, their young wings
And fall,—not having nerve for lofty flight,—
And never shake away th' ignoble dust ;
Whoso neglects himself the world neglects.
A meteor forms no portion of the sky,
But constant blazing stars far off that glow,
Circled in brilliance ever, still invite
The curious telescope's enquiring eye ;
The comet, whirling through the fields of light,
Fed by a mighty energy internal,
The vital element of magnitude,
Becomes, in memory, historical,
Teaching a mimic immortality —
Giving assurance of its oft return —
Predestined, as the Ages roll in waves
Washing the feet of grey Eternity.

IV.

Music doth seek the woods, her first-born child,
Sweet Echo, is the pet of Solitude,

Nursed in the cavern, lauded on the hills
And lulled to dreams in the soft lap of Silence.

David annointed still his flock attended ;
A mystery yet undefined to him
Filled his young mind with lofty aspirations,—
And aspiration inspiration brings.—
The shepherd's occupation leisure gave
To shape perfection ; daily from his reed
Came sounds still softer, breathing harmony ;
The Peasant-Prince sweet echoes hourly made
And chased the trembling infants through the woods,
Pursued them to their caves, and heard their last
Faint sighs as languishing they sank to rest ;
Then felt the pulse of Silence as she slept,
To learn the various touches of his art ;
And thus, so cunning grew his magic fingers,
That, called to Court to make his first display,
He charmed the King and won the daughter's heart.

And one there was in later times, with soul
Devoted to the harmony of sounds ;
Not less creative of his art, but more
Swayed by the demon that in music dwells,—
For music hath its demon as its God.—
Not satisfied a second part to play
In life's grand opera, this man aspired
Sole wonder of the Universe to be.
Such lofty aim demanded high resolves
Of labor tedious, the unbroken toil
Of shadowy years ; but when the spirit calls

The deep soul answers and the body yields.
This modern Orpheus sought for Solitudes
Remote, and far from human feet intrusive :
There, called on all things to promote his task ;
Struck the resounding rock to hear it moan ;
Gave up his ears to the great cavern's mouth
To catch its long drawn sighs ; then pebbles cast
Into the limpid waters which, dividing
Their liquid throats, in tenderest cadency
Complained of this cold sport ; he heard the trout
Mellifluous plunge, and flout the bathing breeze ;
The lowest chirp of birds he heard ; the air,
Yielding a channel to the downy breasts
Of sweeping swallows, clothed their wings with tones
So delicately soft that Harmony
Stood tip-toe with her shell to gather them.
He climb great trees to hear the winds rehearse
Their morning chant among the leaves, and draw
Deep groaning sighs from that colossal organ,
The unhewn wilderness ; he called the clouds
To roll their azure drums at morn and eve ;
The lightning came, but had no charms for him
Until it broke in thunders and so rent
The shivering sky that he could hear it fall.
He turned to gentler sports ; in rills he played,
And flung his naked feet and dashed the spray
In childlike glee, to hear it fall again ;
He drew young leaves dew-covered through his fingers,
That he might hear them scream, then copies made

Of the minutest tone ; he yoked the wolf
 And scourged him at the stake to hear him howl ;
 Would mate him with the fierce hyena there,
 And laugh and shout to hear their mingled cries ;
 He serpents chased to hear them hiss and ring
 Their fatal bells ; the lizard's lightning sweep
 Among the seared leaves supplied his ear
 With tuneful combinations ; even the cricket
 Brought a shrill horn to teach the sharpest note.

Thus as one crazed, this frantic man pursued,
 Through tedious years of dreariest solitude,
 His one idea. All the tuneful choir
 Of bird and beast, though scourged by him and chased,
 Would throng around his hermitage to hear
 The gushing cataracts of his wild harmony,
 As, in the dewy morn or quiet eve,
 He sat long hours discoursing in such numbers
 As moved his soul and into wild convulsions
 Cast his frail body.

Thus perfection came,
 Came in convulsions and announced itself.
 Uprose this wondrous man and girt around
 With grand assurance of capacity,
 Not doubting the result of his hard toils,
 He sought the world—the world that keeps the keys
 Of fair renown—and called on kings to listen.
 Kings came, and multitudes in tumults came,
 Thronging the choking theatres, to hear
 The demon Paginini !

Thus the power
Of Labor, to perfect a single art,
With Solitude combined, in this one case
Sublime appears.

And is it not enough
To be the first in any single art?

V.

But not alone for self-aggrandizement
Doth Solitude her offices employ ;
She hews Ambition of its ruggedness ;
To turbulence, serenity imparts ;
Subdues the rebel thought, and tames the heart—
Doming the spirit in Tranquility —
To softest inclinations ; for the mind,
By contemplation, brings the Passions kneeling
To worship at the shrine of Intellect.

Each orb is a majestic Solitude,
Remote, but still in view, — approachable, —
For Genius, laboring, finds the dim abode.
Fancy, swift darting through the yielding space,
Peoples it — cheating dull reality, —
Imaginative peoples, and surrounds
Its day with light, its night with starry zones.
The Chaldean saw a God in every star,
And Herschel brings the Chaldean a new God.
The rude astrologer, with softened eye,
Caught far off glimpses of divinity,

In mystic revelations dimly shown
 To Hope, forever longing,—realized
 At last,—proclaimed by that auspicious star
 Seen by the Persian sages in the East.—

But these are not my themes : — to earth again
 The giddy muse returns.

VI.

Lo, Daniel Boone,
 Braving the panther's direful leap, erects
 His tent upon the knoll where human feet
 Have left no prints, and eager stoops to taste,
 Where beasts have ancient bathed, the limpid stream ;
 Slaughters the Buffalo and spreads the hide ;
 Lights a quick pile and sends a messenger
 To hail the sky and join the trooping clouds ;
 Prepares a feast that Hercules might envy ;
 Mates his grey eyes with the unblinking stars,
 In grateful meditation prayerfully,
 And sinks to slumber on his mother, earth.
 The giant oak, next day,—as the keen axe,
 Uplifted by the hardy pioneer,
 Rapid descends relentless,—desolate
 Bewails its fate, and fills the startled woods
 With groans resounding, till the forest swells
 Afar with lamentations ; and the wolf,
 Roused from his lair, with glaring eyes protruding,
 Seeks denser shades protective ; swarming birds,

Circling the eddying air, scream overhead,
And dip, adventurous, the deep'ning sky
To find far fathoms of security ;
The eagle downward bends his sun-glazed eye
To note the advent, and, far swooping, oft
Returns, and, curious, contemplates the stranger,
Who day by day enlarges his domain,
And plays the monarch in the wilderness.

Thus Patriarchs stood in ancient times and grew
In the first Solitudes their giant race.

Delightful task, for him who leaves the old,
To make a new, world for himself and his —
The wife who follows him for weal or woe,
Great spirited woman and American —

Delightful task, to hew the cabin sill,
To notch the rising corners and to place
The sloping rafters and the gables rear,
All in a day, — sweet work and quickly done !

To rive from yielding timber the clean board,
Meant, slanting, to receive and turn the rain ;
And all together join without a nail ! —

Axes resound and mauls, but not a nail
Tastes, with its iron fang, the virgin wood.

Rude architecture, but enough for man.

From the low portal of the humble shed
The soul may walk forth in its majesty
And find for meditation ample range.

Soon the trees grow familiar and the hills :
The cabin is a real home ; the fields

Blossom with foreign vines ; the babbling rill,
 Familiar, answers now the prattling tongues,
 And laves the uncovered feet, of boys and girls
 Native and destined round about to see
 The city spread its paved avenues,
 And rear its spires whose golden tongues each morn
 Silent, afar, proclaim the approaching sun.
 Thus do new worlds begin, with one great heart
 To lodge its pulses in the wilderness.

VII.

But not alone the wilderness invites
 Heroes adventurous ; the bounding sea
 Opens her caverns, and the sailor's spirit,
 Daring, is called to vaster Solitudes.

Prone, with his country's banner in his hand,
 Lo ! glorious Franklin gives his life to gaze
 On uninhabitable lands, and seas
 Far frozen in the northern latitudes.
 Where'er the Ocean reached her liquid arms,
 Through empires where the tyrant Winter reigns
 Alone, to crush all human dynasties,
 His mind aspired to venture ; to his eye
 Familiar were the icy cliffs that pile
 Their glassy columns 'gainst the northern sky.
 Transparent world ! what led the hero there ?
 Was it some nymph celestial, liquid born,
 Some princess in those crystal palaces

Long captive held — unfortunate Undine ?—
Not this ; no fancy-tilting knight was he ;
One passion led him : — Glory with great eyes
Circling the universe ;—his country's pride
Touching the pulses of his patriot heart.

Are these the waters, these the primal seas
That left their native caverns to bestride,
With desolating tread, man's wicked realms,
When God was wrathful in the ancient day ?
Pillars of ice ! are ye the buttresses
That earliest based the rainbow's lovely arch ?
Thou element impatient, ever shifting—
Didst thou uphold the ARK when storms were raging ?
When animated nature, at the feet
Of Noah, crowded in a single ship ?
O Solitude, tumultuous and sublime !
When to and fro the RAVEN flew nor found
On earth a resting place, and timid back
The DOVE returned to her imprisonment.

PART III.

I.

But not alone the Solitude, I sing,
Of desolate islands and serene retreats
Where Genius with the Gods may meditate :
I sing the Solitude of Mind ; the power
To draw the sense from its accustomed use
Of natural avenues ; the power to be
Still in the uproar, deaf to all the shouts
Of angered multitudes ; the power divine
To pluck from turbulence the time to think ;
To shape the glowing thoughts to themes divine,
And meditate perfections infinite,
While Fury raves and mobs tumultuous reign.

II.

The great men of the earth are disciplined
In Solitude to grapple with the time,
The battle-moment — the emergency —
For life is but a battle, and the odds
Will ever be upon the side of skill :
What orator can seize and sway the minds
Of thronging auditors without the power

To rise above tumultuous accidents,
 In grand abstraction with his theme ? Whose arm,
 Surrounded by excited senators
 When Rome was trembling, — whose red arm, upraised
 High o'er the head of palsied agitation,
 Reached Jove's domains, and dragged in fury down
 Thunder upon the hosts of Catiline ?

III.

The poet's mind erects its hermitage
 Where'er he goes ; preoccupied, it is
 His privilege in crowds to be alone,
 Condensing rapturous fancies into thoughts
 That glow with ardor and harmonious flow.
 His world is peopled with the dead and living ;
 Shadows to him are substances that come
 From the dim realms of Chaos to perfect
 Epics symmetrical and embryo songs.
 To him alike the woodland walk serene,
 The thronging streets, and echoing palaces,
 Bring burning thoughts, or sad foreboding dreams.
 He meditates sublime on Babel's height,
 And leaves confusion wild to quell itself.

Weary of sylvan sports inhibited,
 The Bard of Avon flies to busier scenes,
 And fits himself to merriest occupations
 Of lowest life. Delightful task, for him
 The fugitive, to light th' ambitious lamps,

In whose red glare the mimic king may strut,
 And show his crown, and ape — how easy ape —
 The ways of tyrants. Active in this office,
 Cheerful and apt in small buffooneries,
 He makes an upward stride, and plays the ghost
 With such perfection as promotion brings,
 Until he towers himself into a king ;
 Voluptuous tastes all regal luxuries,
 And feels the cumbrous weight of tinsel crowns ;
 Feels Power exultant ; traitors learns to know,
 And how to top the high luxurious growth
 Of rank Rebellion ; learns to know a friend,
 A trustful Minister, from one that fawns ;
 Feels the cold tooth of base ingratitude,
 Prepares the scaffold and uplifts the axe.
 Thus Shakespeare, measuring all his power in sports,
 Perfection brought from dim Delusion's realms ;
 For strife of perfect mimicry doth school
 The artist how to whet his instruments.

IV.

Well tutored Genius may abstract itself
 And accurately track its occupation,
 Unjostled by the sweeping multitude
 That elbows common people from the path.
 Lo ! Cæsar comes ! Fly not, ye timid throngs—
 'Tis but his body — far away his mind,
 Fighting the Helvii or unpluming Pompey.

The centre of an army was to Cæsar
 The thickest Solitude, where mighty aims
 Condensed great thoughts and quickened resolution ;
 With eagle eye he saw — on eagle wings
 He swoop'd terrific, and majestic soar'd.

So mighty Alexander, with his myriads
 Crowding the heels of Battle, was alone !
 Alone — with one grand thought engrossed, that made
 him
 A hermit in the midst of multitudes.

V.

Whose tread irregular is that ? who comes,
 His chin concealed beneath the lifted folds
 Of his long sweeping robe — all ears, no eyes —
 Or eyes that inward look as if they listened ?
 The eloquent logic of fixed resolution
 Banishes meditation, and the mind
 Over and over sternly acts its part
 Patiently plotting, while the hilted dagger
 Grows wet and clammy in the fevered grasp :—
 True to the call of shrieking Liberty,
 Brutus approaches.

VI.

Who lingers by the Queen,—grand Isabella ?
 Who speaks by snatches, as the royal ear,
 Shaking its jeweled wand of sweet consent

With graceful inclination, lifts the shell
 That echoes but applause in answering
 The impatient lisnings of a fixed ambition ?
 Columbus seems delighted, and his eye
 Scatters its flashing rays upon the Queen's,
 As if his soul were present ; but his thoughts,
 His mind's rapt eyes, are far away exploring
 The azure-bedded islands of strange seas,
 And the rough edges of the craggy cliffs
 That hedge the Ocean in its westward roll.

VII.

Immortal Siddons stands upon the stage
 Blind to the audience, and oblivious
 Of all things,—save that she is Lady Macbeth.
 The bodily presence of the tragic muse
 Graces the boards ; the spirit of the mind,
 Unearthed and garmented in inspiration,
 Hid by the battlements of Macbeth's Castle,
 Broods ominous and plots with pale-eyed murder.
 She whispers to the earless walls, declaims
 In rapturous soliloquy secure ;
 She sweeps the air with passionate, raving arms,
 And storms with such rapt attitudes, that Fancy
 Not daring to confront reality,
 Drops her illusive glass and vanishes.

Whence comes this power divine ? from Discipline,—
 Oft marshaling the faculties in secret,

Logic perfecting, teaching self-control,—
 'Tis Discipline that gives the towering mind
 The graceful attributes that God himself
 Intended should inhabit the fair form
 Of man, his chosen image,—man who wears
 Commanding attitudes, and moves, inspired,
 In the rapt circle of intelligence,
 With longings that uplift him to the skies.

VIII.

Two youths I knew, each lofty in his aims,
 Each gifted beyond mortals of his type
 With some peculiar excellence; each bent
 In his fond dreams on Immortality.
 The one, dark-browed to Solitude inclined,
 Stern and repelling all frivolities,
 Much given to quiet brooding, with eyes raised,
 Whether in reverence to the Deity,
 Or an upreaching merely to the clouds
 For golden thoughts and images that plume
 The wings of Fancy in her early flights,
 He knew not,—none could penetrate his mind—
 That realm of inclinations, hopes and fears.
 Whether he worship'd God or Fame as first,
 He took no time to question, but his thoughts
 Ran into adamantine resolutions
 To make himself a centre and a star,
 To which the eyes of men in after days,

Through the long telescope of centuries,
 Should gaze at with increase of wonderment.
 The other, open-browed with eyes of fire
 Quick blazing at the touch of cheerfulness ;
 Gentle as Summer ; wayward as the sky
 That curtains April in her hoyden couch ;
 First in the ring of pleasure ; in the race
 Of frolic, foremost ever ; apt of wit ;
 Rapid and smooth-tongued, even eloquent ;
 Well fashioned and of shape majestical,
 For all the graceful actions that persuade
 In him assumed such attitudes as prompt
 Earnest responses and enthusiasm.

This was his fatal gift. Ah ! hapless youth,
 To whom applause is born, and not achieved :—
 He deems mankind his vassals, and demands
 Spontaneous adulation as his due.

And yet these two, so different, were fond friends,
 And often met in lonely glens to scan
 Each other's thoughts, ambitions, hopes and fears.

IX.

One morn, along the dew-lit lawn, these two
 Linked arm in arm, beside the river's marge
 Moved languidly, when sudden thus began
 The cheerful youth :

“ O what a night we had !
 You did not come, yet all the world was there.

The wit and fashion of the city came ;
 And beauty, sparkling, as in gems arrayed,
 Brought many queens to join the festival.
 The music was so rich that every form
 Was touched with gentlest graces ; awkwardness,
 Caught in the swing of harmony, did seem
 As if its cloven feet were used to slippers,
 Moving celestial, — such is music's power :—
 Fair maids enchanting came, those merry moons
 That sway the surface of life's rosy sea,
 Each in pursuit of her Endymion.
 And O ! the wine ! it was so brimmed with sparks,
 Those laughing eyes of merriment that give
 Delightful promise to the gleeful spirit.

“ I stood apart awhile and thought to act
 The scholar — to be one that could not dance —
 Demure, abstracted — but my veins took fire,
 So many torches touched them, and my heart,
 Eager with mirth, embraced the giddy hour
 And lost itself in whirls of ecstacies.”

X.

The graver youth, not inattentive, heard
 His giddy friend ; and thus responsive spoke :
 “ I held a festival myself, last night ;
 In my own closet, with my books alone.
 My little chamber thronged with visitors.
 Some were the spirits of antiquity,

Those demi-gods that walk the dusky realms
 Of dim Tradition ; mystic forms that grace
 The niches of the old world's Pantheon ; —
 And others of a giant race who came
 Grateful to greet their masters ; Poets came,
 Fresh from Olympian sports, with bays yet green
 And flowers unwilted by the century suns ;
 Came warriors storming from the battle fields,
 With dinted shields and foreheads darkly gashed.
 O these were glorious guests ; Milton was there,
 And seemed that he would let me touch his robe !

“ And not without fair BEAUTY was my throng :
 Eve came with swollen cheeks, but timid fled
 As if the flaming sword was driving her ;
 Came Helen, from the thundering wall of Troy,
 Searching the Grecian host with misty eyes
 To catch the towering form of Menelaus ;
 Apelles heralded the bright Aspasia,
 To whose sweet voice the ear of Socrates
 Leaned listening as if charmed with harmony ;
 Wild Sappho stood a moment in my presence,
 But glided into clouds as doth a rim
 Of beauty from the rainbow, nor returned ;
 Esther the queen, in Summer smiles arrayed,
 And Ruth the widow, in her weeds, were there ;
 And desolate Hagar from the wilderness,
 With wreath of moss upon her shaded brows ;
 And Jeptha's daughter, in her long white robes,
 Passed through with troops of virgins following ;

A wild, enchanting creature, timidly
 Standing in brooding hesitation, came
 To see these ancient dames ; her virgin form,
 Thin covered by a purple robe loose flowing,
 Was zoneless, while her marble arms impulsive,
 Reaching through glossy curls, did brush aside
 The ringlet veil that covered her brown eyes —
 Wells bottom-paved and lucid with rare gems ; —
 On me she turned their full orbéd radiance,
 Then looked around, amazed, and fled away !
 Impatient fled, expectant of pursuit !
 My heart ran rapturous —

“ This broke the spell ;
 All my dream company had taken leave ;
 And open wide the Iliad lay before me ! ”

XI.

These two in after years I knew, and noted
 The advance of each along the road to fame.
 Our gifted youth was foremost in the race ;
 Wreaths flowered spontaneous on his brow and shed
 Fragrance around him ; and the voice of praise
 Made his rapt ear its own re-echoing shell.
 He needed but the stimulant of shouts
 To rouse his genius ; and the thronging crowd
 Choked up the temple when he deigned to speak.
 He needed not to labor ; why retire
 To dreary chambers in the dead of night,

To plan the great oration ? it would come
 Impetuous from his tongue upon occasion,—
 Impetuous as the furious tread of soldiers
 Brinking the edge of battle,— it would come,
 To rouse the daring and inspire the timid :
 So the world hailed a young Demosthenes ;
 And so he deemed himself Demosthenes ;
 And thought that he had done enough for fame.
 Hence the whole story of his life made up
 That worthless eulogy : “*He left great signs
 Of Genius*”— but he labored not and died.
 The world was busy with his memory,
 As savans are, discussing meteors,
 That with excessive light fire their own temples,
 And perish in the self-created flame.

XII.

That other whom we saw amid his books,—
 Companioned with the demi-gods of old,—
 Remote and patient, plodded slow his way,
 And seemed to take but little note of time.
 Shunning for Learning’s sake a life of pleasure,
 He dreamed along the bustling streets and stumbled
 Over the brickbat pavement as he walked,
 So that men wondered if he was insane.
 Yet his career was upward, to the hill
 Where the young Ages meet and live together,
 Devoted to the single task of weaving

Garlands immortal for the sons of Fame :—
 For in the night-time, when the giddy Dance
 Its devotees commanded to Mirth's Halls,
 He patient delved the golden mine of learning ;
 Turned up rich jewels at every heave, and sat
 Eager contemplating, while nations slept,
 The prizes that lay sparkling at his feet,
 And careful saved for future exhibition.
 So Humboldt labored ; so brave Audubon ;
 So Milton toiled 'til he achieved the height
 Where the infernals challenged God to battle.

XIII.

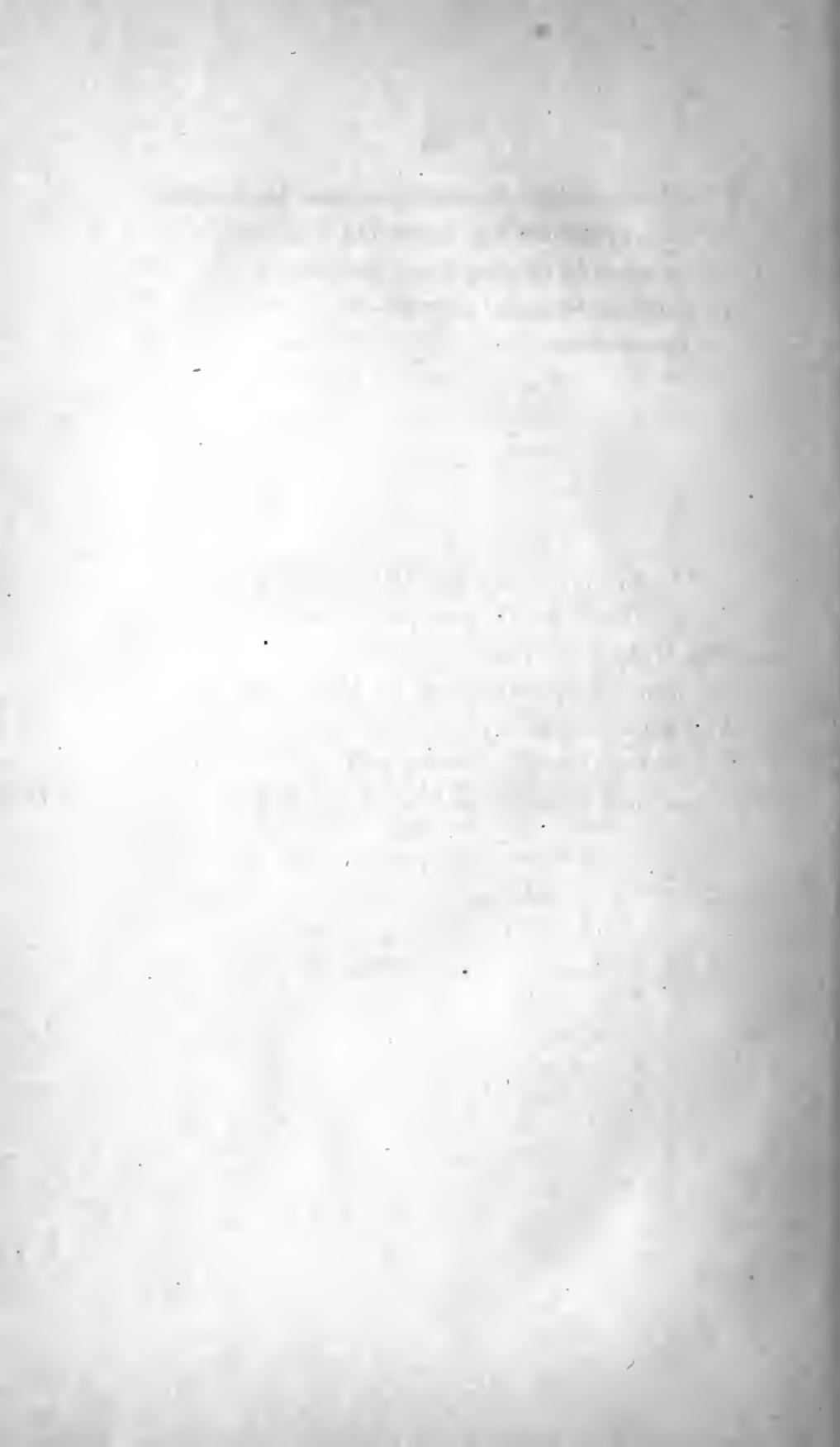
Aspiring minds have patterns in the past :
 The stormy youth may copy Marius
 Or Cæsar if he will — or Hannibal ;
 The patriot may take Hampden for his guide,
 Epaminondas of the British Isle ;
 Or Washington, the pillar that upholds
 Our grand colossal FANE OF LIBERTY ;
 The graceless may unbend himself before
 The mirror that so fashioned Cicero ;
 The patient may find Michael Angelo,
 Painting the unfading panels of a chapel,
 And Heaven condensing on its humble dome ;
 And even the gentlest softly may recline,
 Prone on the meadow, near the grassy cell
 Melodious of the charming nightingale —

That feathered hermit,—and thus tuned his thoughts
By notes of harmony, as did of old
Pindar when he invaded Pan's domain,
To plagiarize immortal melodies
For mortal ears.

There is one Solitude that all must reach,
And go alone! must edge a precipice—
Edge it alone — for on its crumbling brink
The nearest friend withdraws the kindred grasp,
And drops, impatiently — reluctant, drops
The icy form into the yawning gulf
Whose shadowy waves no beaches find to lave.

ERRATA.

On pages 9 and 41, for *Apelles* read *Pericles*.
On page 45, top line, for *tuned* read *tune*.













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